MARVEL

CATES
HENRICHON

389

DOCTOR STRANGE

7'0"
6'6"
6'0"
5'6"
5'0"
4'6"
4'0"
3'6"
3'0"
2'6"

STEPHEN STRANGE WAS A PREEMINENT SURGEON UNTIL A CAR ACCIDENT DAMAGED THE NERVES IN HIS HANDS. HIS EGO DROVE HIM TO SCOUR THE GLOBE FOR A MIRACLE CURE. INSTEAD, HE FOUND A MYSTERIOUS WIZARD CALLED THE ANCIENT ONE WHO TAUGHT HIM MAGIC AND THAT THERE ARE THINGS IN THIS WORLD BIGGER THAN HIMSELF. THESE LESSONS ENABLED STEPHEN TO BECOME THE SORCERER SUPREME, EARTH'S FIRST DEFENSE AGAINST ALL MANNER OF MAGICAL THREATS. HIS PATIENTS CALL HIM...

DOCTOR STRANGE

LAST TIME...

MEPHISTO IMPRISONED STEPHEN STRANGE'S SOUL IN AN IMMATERIAL SUB-REALM OF HELL. MEANWHILE, BATS, STEPHEN'S GHOST-DOG FRIEND, POSSESSED HIS BODY IN LAS VEGAS, AND TRIED TO RETRIEVE STRANGE'S SOUL. BUT THE APPEARANCE OF CLEA, STEPHEN'S FORMER WIFE, LED THEM ASTRAY, AND INTO A CONFRONTATION WITH SHUMA-GORATH. FORTUNATELY, THE SOULS OF THE AVENGERS--BLACK PANTHER, FALCON, CAPTAIN MARVEL, HAWKEYE, THOR, AND JANE FOSTER (THE RULES IN NECROTIC SUB-REALMS ARE BEYOND OUR UNDERSTANDING)--HAD BEEN SENT TO THE SAME PLACE. THEY FORCED SHUMA-GORATH TO RETREAT TEMPORARILY, BUT MAY NOT HAVE SUCCEEDED WITHOUT THE HELP OF...DORMAMMU!

THE EVENTS OF THIS ISSUE TAKE PLACE CONCURRENTLY WITH THOSE IN *DOCTOR STRANGE: DAMNATION #4.*

"BLEEDING NEON"
PART FOUR

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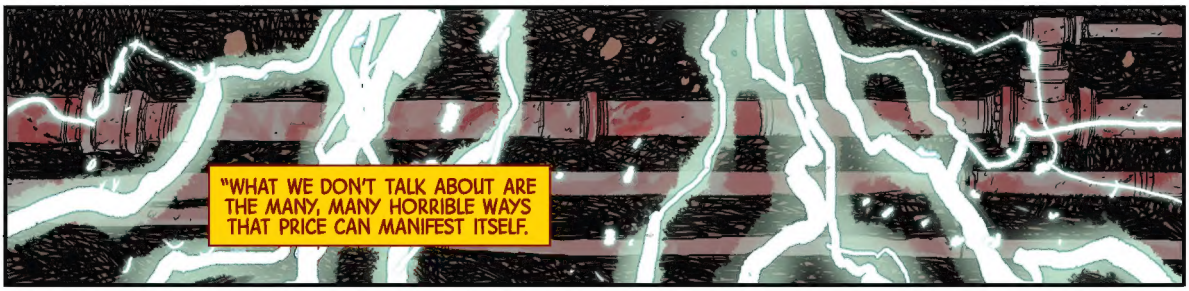
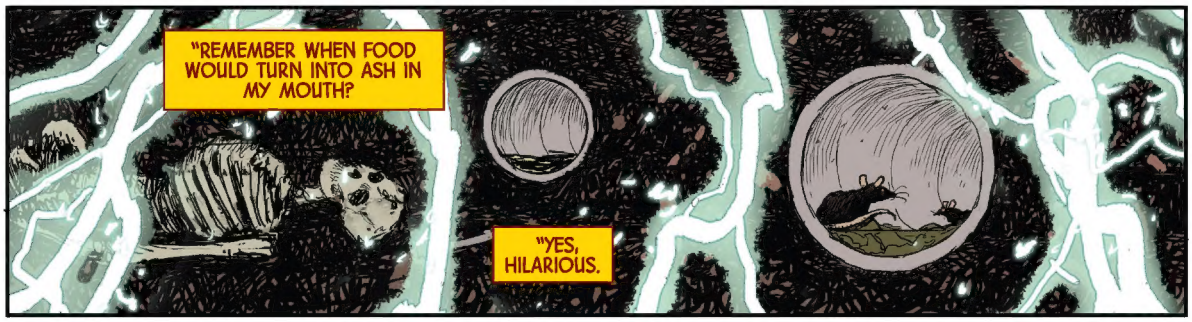


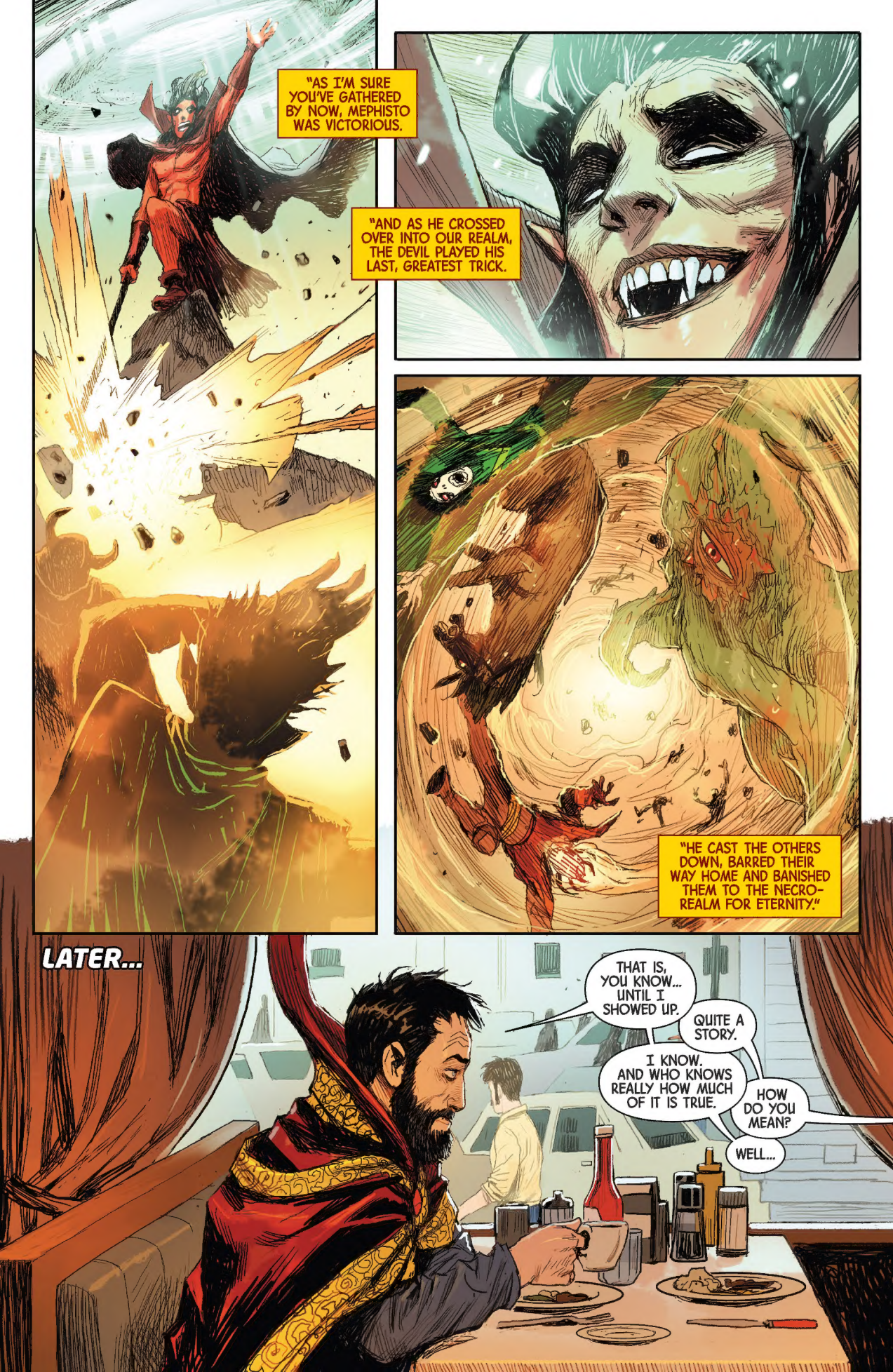


"ACTION, REACTION. COST PAID.

"OR, IF YOU WERE TO, SAY, RESURRECT A CITY AND ALL OF ITS INHABITANTS FROM THE DEAD...

"...THE PRICE FOR THAT ACTION MAY BE THAT EVERY SINGLE DEMONIC ENTITY THAT HATES YOU AND WANTS TO SEE YOU DEAD TAKES NOTICE OF *THE VERY LARGE HOLE IN THE FABRIC OF DIMENSIONAL MAGIC* YOU LEFT WIDE OPEN.
"AS PRICES GO, THIS ONE IS FAIRLY STRAIGHTFORWARD, I THINK.

"LUCKILY, THE COLLECTIVE LORDS OF SEVERAL HELLS ARE NOT EXACTLY KNOWN FOR THEIR AMENABLE NATURES.
"(AND YES, I'M USING "LUCKILY" QUITE LOOSELY HERE.)
"I'M TOLD THEY EACH VENTURED TO A LONG-ABANDONED NECRO-DIMENSION WHERE THE DOORWAY WAS THE MOST POWERFUL.
"THERE, A RATHER FEROCIOUS WAR ERUPTED OVER WHICH OF THEM WOULD CROSS THE BARRIER TO EARTH FIRST AND BRING ME MY DAMNATION.


"AS I'M SURE YOU'VE GATHERED BY NOW, MEPHISTO WAS VICTORIOUS.
"AND AS HE CROSSED OVER INTO OUR REALM, THE DEVIL PLAYED HIS LAST, GREATEST TRICK.
"HE CAST THE OTHERS DOWN, BARRED THEIR WAY HOME AND BANISHED THEM TO THE NECRO-REALM FOR ETERNITY."
LATER...
THAT IS, YOU KNOW... UNTIL I SHOWED UP.
QUITE A STORY.
I KNOW. AND WHO KNOWS REALLY HOW MUCH OF IT IS TRUE.
HOW DO YOU MEAN?
WELL...

"...CONSIDER THE SOURCE."
...AND BANISHED THE OTHER LORDS TO THIS HORRID NECRO-REALM FOR ALL OF--
WAAAMM
WHERE IS SHE?! WHERE DID GORATH TAKE HER?
WHO?!
YOU KNOW DAMN WELL WHO I'M TALKING ABOUT, DORMAMMU.
WHERE IS CLEA?!
HAHA! OH, STEPHEN...

MEPHISTO HAS WRAPPED YOU AROUND HIS FINGER LIKE HE HAS THE REST OF US, STRANGE.
IF MY NIECE WERE HERE...
...I'D KNOW.
NO ONE IS COMING FOR YOU. NO ONE IS COMING FOR ANY OF US.
LIKE IT OR NOT...
...DORMAMMU IS YOUR ONLY HOPE.
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? YOU HAVE A WAY OUT?
IF I COULD LEAVE THIS PLACE OF MY OWN ACCORD I WOULD NOT BE SPEAKING TO YOU.
NO. I AM NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO REOPEN THE GATEWAY TO MY OWN REALM.
JUST AS YOU ARE NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO REOPEN THE DOOR TO YOURS. BUT TOGETHER WE CAN--
YOU HAVE LOST YOUR MIND.

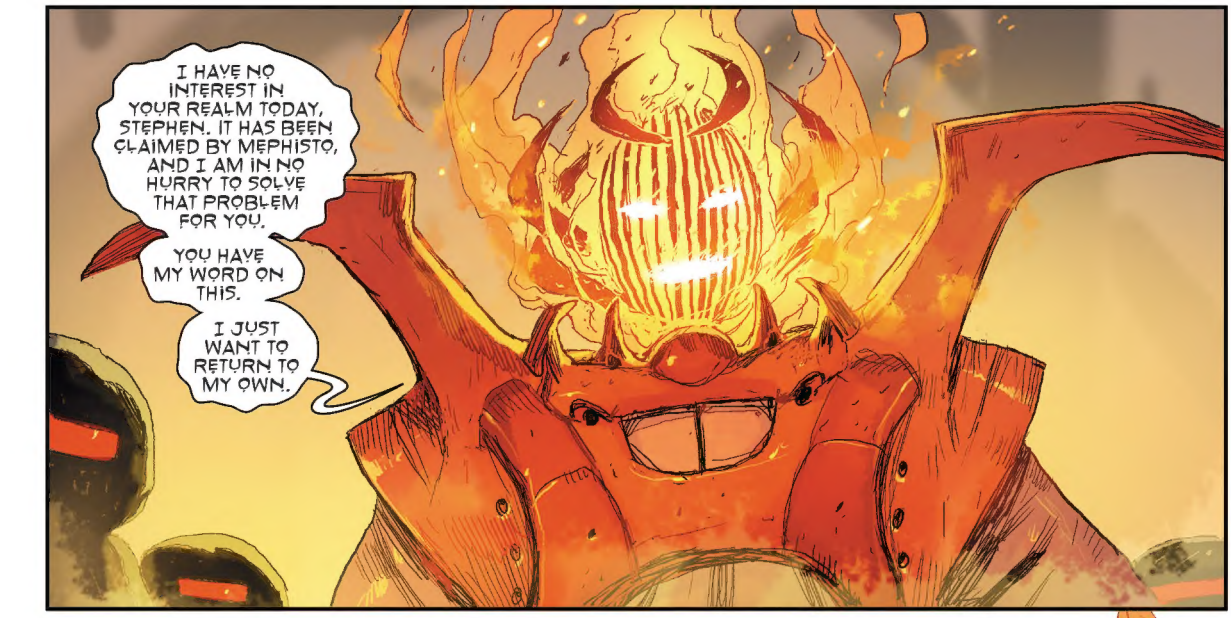
YOU DON'T REALLY THINK I'M FALLING FOR THIS, DO YOU?

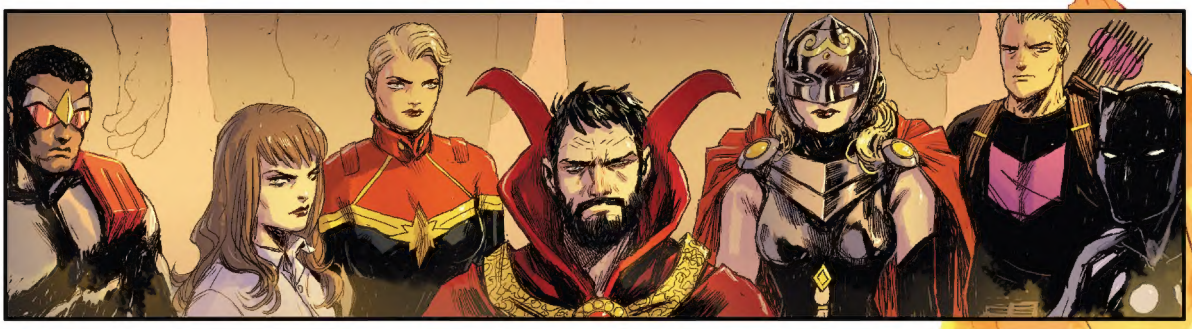
WAIT, WHAT? WHAT JUST HAPPENED?
HE WANTS ME TO REOPEN THE PORTAL SO WE CAN LEAVE. AND IN THE PROCESS, ALLOW HIM PASSAGE TO EARTH!
WHICH, BY THE WAY, IS SOMETHING THAT *IS LITERALLY MY ENTIRE JOB* TO PREVENT FROM HAPPENING.

YES, AND HOW'S THAT BEEN GOING LATELY?

THAT'S IT.
HEY, HEY! STOP IT.

OKAY. OUR SOULS REMAIN TRAPPED HERE FOR ETERNITY WHILE OUR BODIES ARE USED AS HELL PUPPETS BACK ON EARTH...
...*OR* WE WORK WITH DORMAMMU AND LEAVE BUT RISK UNLEASHING HELL ON EARTH. AGAIN. I THINK WE NEED TO CALM DOWN AND--
IF I MAY...


I HAVE NO INTEREST IN YOUR REALM TODAY, STEPHEN. IT HAS BEEN CLAIMED BY MEPHISTO, AND I AM IN NO HURRY TO SOLVE THAT PROBLEM FOR YOU.
YOU HAVE MY WORD ON THIS.
I JUST WANT TO RETURN TO MY OWN.



HEY, UH... POINT OF ORDER?

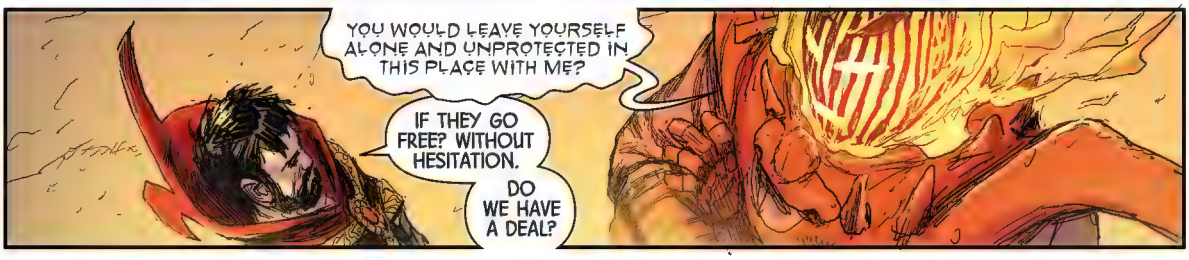
WE'RE TRAPPED IN HERE, TOO, MAN. I'D GENUINELY APPRECIATE IT IF WE COULD MAYBE HAVE AN AVENGERS-ONLY CONVERSATION ABOUT THIS?
NO OFFENSE, MAGIC SUPER VILLAIN.
NONE TAKEN.

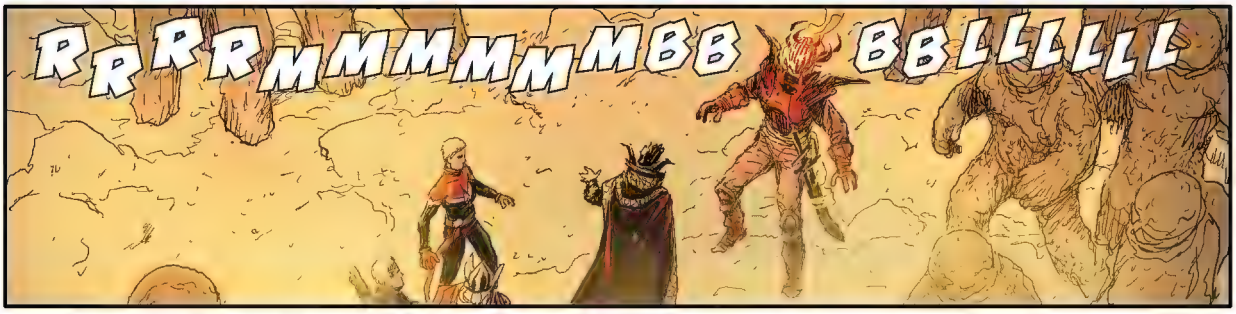
FINE. BATS, STAY HERE AND WATCH DORMAMMU. KILL HIM IF HE TRIES ANYTHING.
AND WHAT IS YOUR STORY, LITTLE ONE? YOU ARE MEANT TO KILL DORMAMMU?
YEAH, LOOK. HONESTLY, I'M NOT REAL SURE WHY HE SAID THAT.
I DON'T GOT LIKE... POWERS OR NOTHIN'.
AH.
PLEASE DON'T TELL HIM I TOLD YOU THAT.
YOU HAVE MY WORD.
AH, @#$%, DID I JUST MAKE A DEAL WITH--
OKAY, DORMAMMU...

...LET'S DO THIS.
IF IT WILL GET MY FRIENDS OUT OF THIS HELL, THEN SO BE IT.

BUT WE HAVE CONDITIONS.
VERY WELL.
FIRST, THOR GETS TO BREAK YOUR LEGS.
STEPHEN...
FINE.

THEY ALL GO FIRST. ALL OF MY FRIENDS GO THROUGH THE GATE, THEN I SEND YOU TO YOUR REALM.
AND THEN ME.


YOU WOULD LEAVE YOURSELF ALONE AND UNPROTECTED IN THIS PLACE WITH ME?
IF THEY GO FREE? WITHOUT HESITATION.
DO WE HAVE A DEAL?

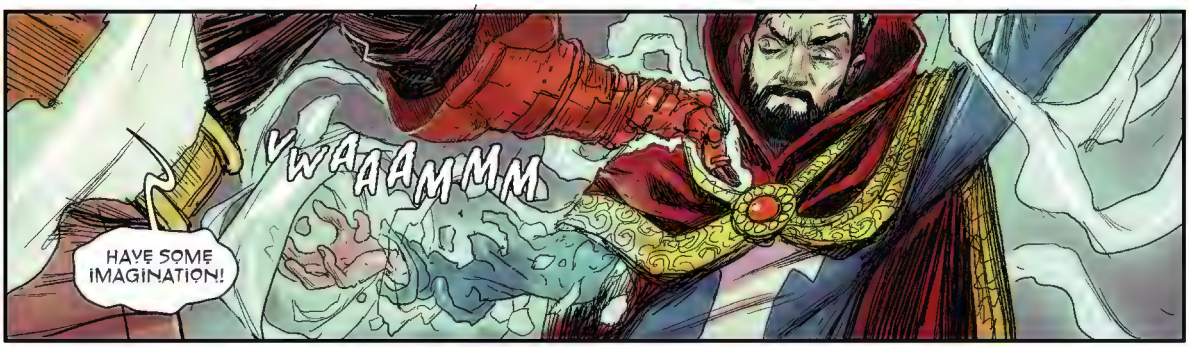

RRRRMMMMMMBB BBLLLLLL

WELL, THAT'S... OMINOUS...
THAT WAS NOT ME...

AH, AND THAT WOULD BE THE OTHER FALLEN LORDS OF HELL. SHUMA-GORATH, NIGHTMARE, AND WHAT'S LEFT OF THEIR PATHETIC HORDES.
I SUPPOSE IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY CAUGHT YOUR STINK IN THIS REALM.
RIGHT. EVERYTHING'S MY FAULT.
NOW OR NEVER, DORMY. WHAT'S IT GONNA BE?
LET US BE QUICK.

I SAID QUICK! YOU CAN DO BETTER THAN THIS, STRANGE!
VWAAMMM
NOT--UGH--ONE-HANDED I CAN'T!

HA! YOU ARE MADE OF SOUL STUFF NOW.
VWAAAM


VWAAAMMM
HAVE SOME IMAGINATION!

VWAAAMMM

OKAY, NO IDEA HOW LONG THE DOOR WILL STAY OPEN, AVENGERS. SO LET'S DO THIS. JUST LIKE WE PLANNED.

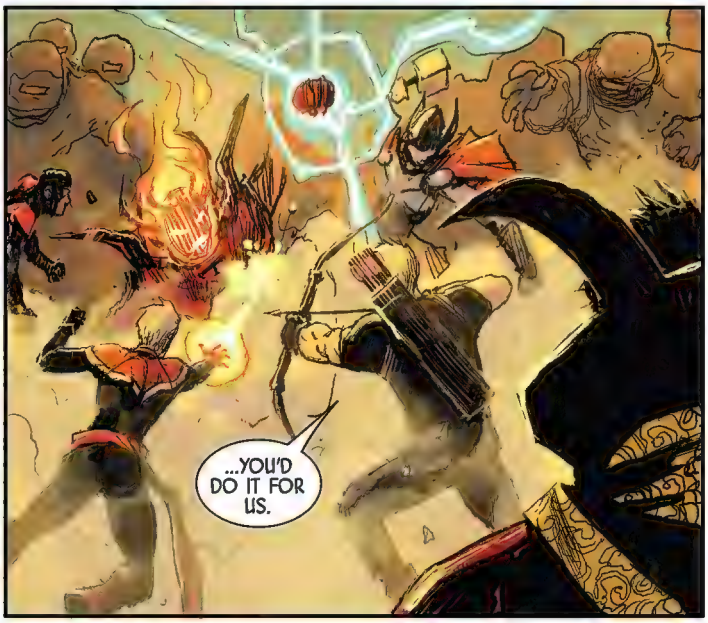
EVERYONE READY?

NOW!

HOW DARE YOU!!! WHAT-- WHAT IS THIS?! WE HAD A DEAL!
YES, WELL, WE MADE A DEAL, TOO.

WE WENT WITH THE DEVIL WE KNOW.

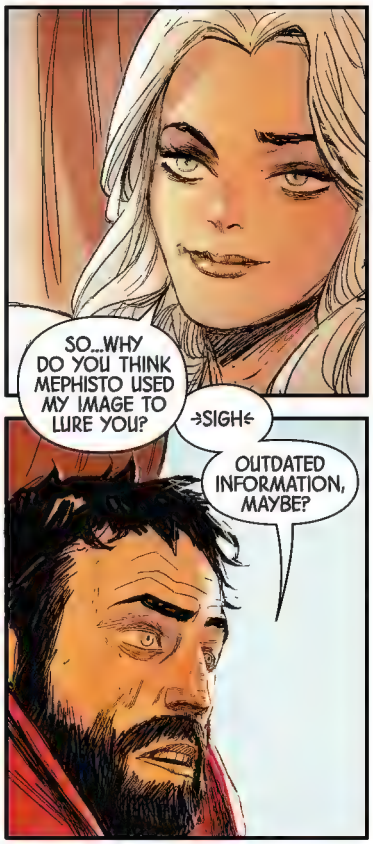
GO AHEAD, DOC. GO FIX THIS HELL THING. WE GOT THIS.
YEAH, YEAH...
TH-THANK YOU FOR THIS. I CAN'T EXPRESS HOW--

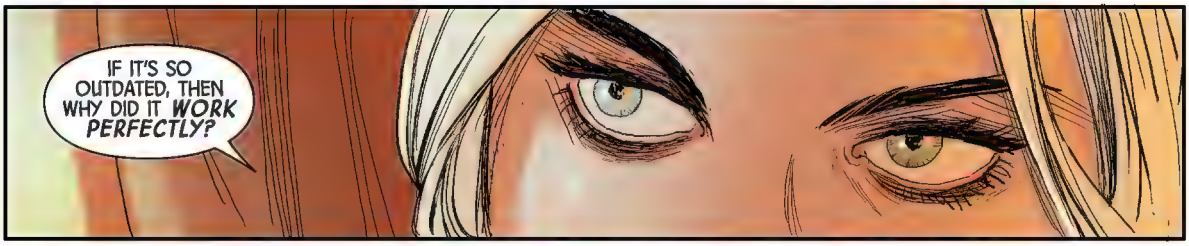

...YOU'D DO IT FOR US.

"AND THAT IS HOW I LEFT THEM.
RAGHH!!! I WILL FIND YOU, STEPHEN STRANGE! THIS DAY WILL HAUNT YOU FOR ETERNITY!
"AFTER EVERYTHING I HAD DONE...AFTER ALL THE TIMES I HAD FAILED AND UNLEASHED HORROR ON THEM AND THEIR WORLD...
"...THE AVENGERS CHOSE TO STAY IN HELL TO ALLOW ME THE CHANCE TO PUT THINGS RIGHT ON EARTH.
EARTH. LAS VEGAS. NOW!
"AND SO, HAVING BETRAYED DORMAMMU, ABANDONED MY FRIENDS IN HELL, AND ESCAPED MEPHISTO'S NECROTIC SOUL PRISON, I ARRIVED BACK IN LAS VEGAS.
"AND THEN..."

AND...WELL, THAT'S ABOUT IT, REALLY. I'M SORRY, I FEEL LIKE I'VE BEEN TALKING INCESSANTLY THIS ENTIRE TIME.
HOW HAVE YOU BEEN, CLEA?
...AND?
WHAT HAPPENED?!
OH, YES. WELL, JOHNNY BLAZE WENT TO HELL AND BECAME ITS NEW KING.
HE LIBERATED EVERYONE'S SOULS AND I WAS THEN POSSESSED BY THE COMBINED SPIRITS OF THE AVENGERS AND I DEFEATED MEPHISTO WITH MAGIC SOUL LIGHTNING AND IMPRISONED HIM FOR ETERNITY IN HIS LAS VEGAS TOWER.
IT WAS QUITE THE SPECTACLE, REALLY.
WOW. I WISH I COULD HAVE SEEN THAT.
EDITOR'S NOTE: CHECK OUT DAMNATION #4 TO SEE ALL OF THAT FUN!

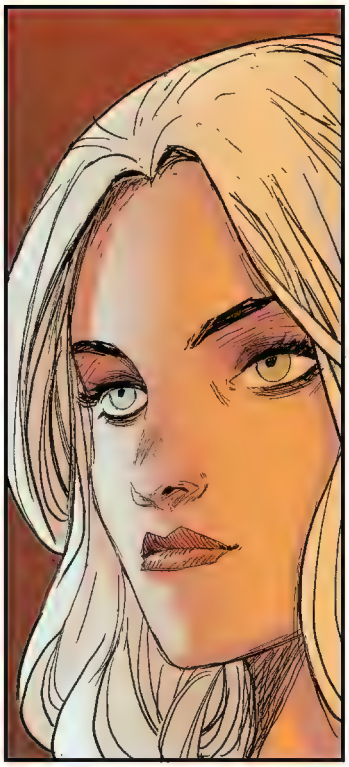
SO, ANYWAY... I JUST WANTED TO MAKE SURE YOU WERE ACTUALLY OKAY, IS ALL.
WELL, THANK YOU, STEPHEN. I'M DOING WELL.


SO...WHY DO YOU THINK MEPHISTO USED MY IMAGE TO LURE YOU?
-SIGH-
OUTDATED INFORMATION, MAYBE?


IF IT'S SO OUTDATED, THEN WHY DID IT *WORK PERFECTLY?*

TOUCHE.
OR... MAYBE...

...MAYBE HE KNEW YOU WERE THE ONLY PERSON I WOULD BELIEVE WOULD COME AND HELP ME LIKE THAT.
I MEAN... YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON I HAVEN'T LET DOWN.
...LATELY.



STEPHEN...
STOP BEING SUCH A BABY. IT'S NOT CUTE.
W-WHAT?
YOU JUST GOT DONE TELLING ME THIS IMMENSE STORY ABOUT HOW ALL OF YOUR FRIENDS CAME TO YOUR SIDE WHEN YOU NEEDED HELP, AND YOU'RE STILL ACTING MOPEY AND DEPRESSED AND...
AND...WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU SHAVED?
I'VE HAD A TROUBLING YEAR, CLEA.
OKAY? AS OPPOSED TO THE PREVIOUS FEW YEARS THAT HAVE BEEN TROUBLE FREE?
CLEA...
WHAT'S CHANGED?
WHAT'S MISSING? WHAT HAVE YOU LOST THAT YOU FEEL ALONE WHEN SURROUNDED BY THOSE WHO LOVE YOU?

OH. I SEE...
MEPHISTO SHOULD HAVE USED *HER* AS A LURE.
YOU'D STILL BE THERE.
DON'T DO THIS...
SHE'S A-- SHE WAS JUST A FRIEND.
I KNOW.
GO HOME, STEPHEN. TAKE A SHOWER. GET RID OF THAT RIDICULOUS THING ON YOUR FACE. STOP MOPING.
AND FOR GOD'S SAKE...

"...JUST CALL HER."
ZELMA
HEY...
YEAH, IT'S ME...
TO BE CONTINUED...

NEXT: BACK TO THE SANCTUM! **#390** ON SALE IN MAY!

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